



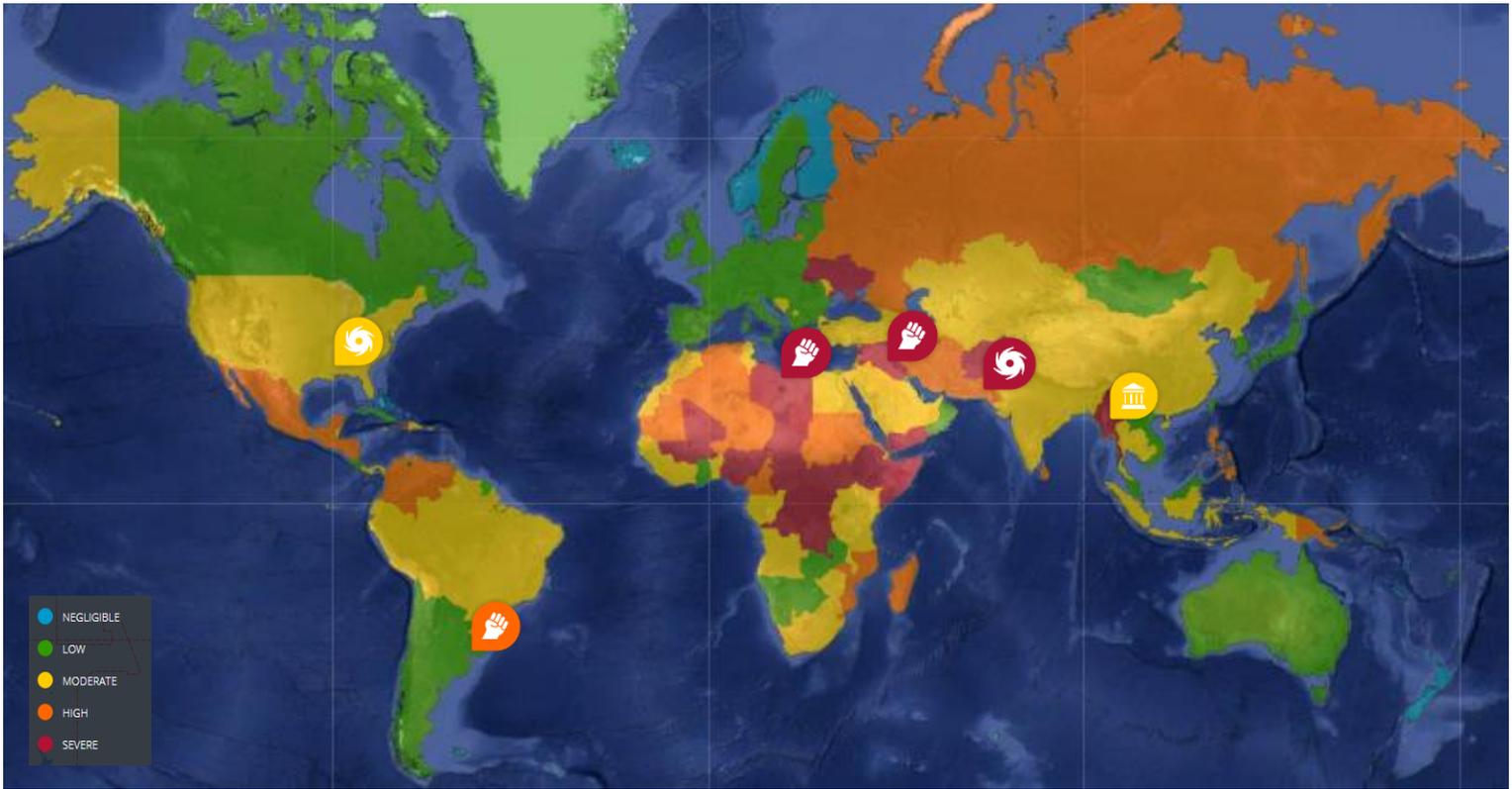
WEEKLY RISK ROUNDUP

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KEY STORIES TO LOOK OUT FOR:



Argentina
Violent unrest in Buenos Aires linked to vice president's corruption case



Libya
Severe clashes between rival militias in Tripoli



United States
Emergency declared over Mississippi water crisis



Iraq
Protests erupt nationwide following resignation of Shiite cleric



Pakistan
Devastating floods reported throughout the country



Myanmar
Aung San Suu Kyi faces up to 122 years imprisonment



GLOBAL HEADLINES



Argentina

Violent unrest in Buenos Aires linked to vice president's corruption case

Police deployed water cannons and fired tear gas in Buenos Aires on 27 August, amid clashes with supporters of Argentine Vice President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. The unrest occurred days after a federal prosecutor recommended the Vice President serve a 12-year prison sentence for alleged corruption.

Thousands of Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner's supporters mobilised across the country on 27 August in solidarity with the Vice President. The largest demonstration took place outside her house in Buenos Aires' Recoleta neighbourhood, where the opposition-led city government had ordered police to erect fences to "guarantee public order, social peace and coexistence". However, the barricades reportedly infuriated the demonstrators and the heightened tensions resulted in violence. In a bid to restore order, riot police resorted to the use of aggressive crowd dispersal tactics, including water cannons and tear gas. At least 14 police officers were injured in the unrest and four protesters were arrested, according to the city government.

After the protest had subsided, the Vice President addressed the demonstrators and thanked them for their support. She said the violence was "provoked by a hatred of Peronism" - referring to the Peronist political ideology of her Justicialist Party. Meanwhile, incumbent President Alberto Fernandez repudiated the Buenos Aires government's decision to erect fences and condemned the use of "institutional violence" against the demonstrators. The President also called for an end to the harassment of Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner and expressed his solidarity with his Vice President in the face of "judicial persecution".

Several days later, on 1 September, Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner was unharmed after an individual misfired a handgun outside of her home. Video footage showed a weapon held next to Ms. Fernandez' face, in what Argentine politicians are calling an assassination attempt after President Fernandez claimed that the weapon was loaded. A 35-year old Brazilian male was arrested at the scene.

Comment: The unrest seen in Buenos Aires came after a federal prosecutor on 22 August requested Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner be jailed for 12 years and barred from holding public office due to her alleged involvement in a corruption scheme. More specifically, she stands accused of awarding inflated public-works contracts to a friend whilst president between 2007 and 2015, with prosecutors claiming a loss of state funds of around one billion USD. Twelve other people have been indicted in the case alongside Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner.

Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner has previously been named in nearly a dozen other cases of suspected corruption, bribery, or money laundering, but this is the first case to go to trial. For her part, Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner has long denied any wrongdoing and claims the charges are politically motivated. However, despite her pleas of innocence and legal immunity as vice president, the latest corruption allegations appear to have unnerved Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner as she has reportedly attempted to have some prosecutors on the case removed.

It is likely that a verdict in the trial will be announced in the coming months. If found guilty, she would only be imprisoned if the Argentine Supreme Court ratified her sentence, or if she lost her seat in the Senate - and with it her parliamentary immunity. Moreover, Ms. Fernandez de Kirchner will likely appeal any guilty ruling up to the Supreme Court – a process that could take years. As such, there is a risk of similar politically motivated unrest in the coming months, particularly in the run-up to, and in the wake of, any developments in the corruption case. Furthermore, the allegations are likely to exacerbate political tensions in Argentina against the backdrop of a severe economic crisis that saw inflation soar past 70 percent in recent months. The apparent attempt on her life will also very likely prompt a review of the security arrangements around prominent Argentine political figures, and may also see additional security at government installations in the short to medium term.



Libya

Severe clashes between rival militias in Tripoli

On 26 August, clashes broke out in Tripoli between militias supporting the two rival administrations of the country, the western, UN-supported, government in Tripoli led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, and the eastern government in Tobruk, led by Fathi Bashagha, which has the backing of the Libyan parliament. According to the Tripoli government, the hostilities commenced when the Tobruk government cancelled planned negotiations and attacked a military convoy on Az Zawiyah Street, in the centre of Tripoli.

Fighters allied with Bashagha reported early gains but failed to take control of territory inside the city, with the violence soon escalating to reports of indiscriminate fighting on multiple fronts in Tripoli, including the city's defunct Tripoli International Airport. A major military convoy, supporting Bashagha, halted before reaching the capital. Pro-Bashagha commander, Osama Juweili, admitted that while the unrest was triggered due to friction between militias in the capital, attempting to capitalise on it to install a government supported by the parliament 'is not a crime.' The clashes lasted until Sunday morning, following a tentative peace instigated by a meeting of the two rival governments in Tripoli.

The Libyan Health Ministry has confirmed at least 32 people were killed during the clashes, with more than 159 wounded. Hundreds of people remained stranded in dangerous locations and are unable to evacuate following the crisis. Video footage from the city showed burnt vehicles, multiple explosions and gunshots and critical infrastructure damaged, including at least six hospitals shelled. Emergency services responded quickly, requesting that residents remain inside for the duration of the hostilities, as everyday life was paralysed in the Libyan capital. Major businesses and educational institutions ceased operations throughout the weekend, while several inbound flights to the city's Mitiga International Airport were cancelled due to the violence.

The international community was unanimously opposed to the situation. The US, Turkey and Egypt condemned the hostilities and urged the involved sides to cease all fighting and initiate dialogue, whilst the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, called for the immediate cessation of violence in Tripoli and the protection of civilian lives.

Comment: The hostilities marked the worst violence that the Libyan capital has faced since 2020. Since the toppling of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the country has experienced two civil wars, and has suffered from a persistent state of insecurity and instability.

The situation seemed as though it was stabilising when in October 2020 a ceasefire agreement was signed and in March 2021, the Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed with a mandate to schedule elections for December 2021. However, the GNU failed to deliver these elections, and as a result, the parliament in Tobruk chose to unilaterally nominate Bashagha as PM. This action caused the ceasefire agreement to collapse. The UN-recognised government in Tripoli currently holds less than 20 percent of the country, and Bashagha has attempted multiple times since March to achieve territorial gains in Tripoli. The most recent attempt in July resulted in 13 casualties. The Tobruk government, while not internationally recognised, has support from a powerful domestic faction, which includes Aguila Saleh, the Speaker of Parliament, and the military commander Khalifa Haftar, both of whom seem reluctant to make an agreement with Dbeibah.

It is highly likely that while hostilities have temporarily ceased, the eastern government will persist in creating opportunities to interfere in Tripoli, wishing to compel Dbeibah into an agreement or even to topple the western government militarily. Regardless, it remains unlikely that the eastern faction will succeed in achieving substantial gains in Tripoli. Turkish forces deployed in the capital alongside considerable air support will almost certainly prevent significant military victory for Bashagha's forces. Meanwhile, whilst the eastern government fails to control Tripoli and lacks international recognition, Dbeibah is able to leverage his control of the capital and international recognition to solidify his position. As a result, regardless of their territorial gains, it is likely a new deal between the rival factions will be brokered, albeit only once all other means are exhausted, which includes an intensification of hostilities in Tripoli and Khoms, a frontier city in the territory held by the GNU.

Travellers to the region should ensure they have contingency measures in place such as security and evacuation plans should the conflict spread, or the security environment deteriorate rapidly. Travel to Libya should only be undertaken with the support of in-country journey management services and a thorough risk assessment.



United States Emergency declared over Mississippi water crisis

In Jackson, Mississippi's largest city, the water system has begun to fail; multiple days of torrential rainfall and flooding have damaged the largest water treatment plants in the city which has left thousands of residents without reliable supplies of water. On 30 August, US president Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration and ordered federal assistance to support the emergency response in the state.

Comment: The water crisis comes after record-breaking rainfall which resulted in the Pearl River flooding streets, forcing evacuations and causing damage to buildings. Though flooding was less severe than anticipated, the city's water treatment system has been severely affected which in turn has impacted over 150,000 people.

In response to the water crisis, Governor Tate Reeves declared a state of emergency for Jackson, and deployed the state's National Guard to distribute drinking and non-drinking water to city residents until the water system becomes operational. Distribution centres have been set up in different parts of the city. The severity of the issue and challenging logistical task of water distribution have led President Biden's administration to approve an emergency declaration. Federal assistance will allow the state to increase emergency measures to address the issue; the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will coordinate relief efforts with local authorities.

Though efforts to start emergency repairs are underway, the water crisis is expected to continue over the coming weeks. Health officials have advised individuals in Jackson to boil water for at least three minutes prior to consumption and to locate their closest distribution centre to secure drinking and non-potable water. The water shortage has had an impact on services, with businesses operating at reduced hours. Individuals with interests in the state are advised to keep abreast of the situation via official sources.



Iraq Protests erupt nationwide following resignation of Shiite cleric

On 29 August, Shiite cleric and influential political leader Moqtada al-Sadr announced his intention to resign from Iraqi politics. The shock announcement triggered a wave of unrest throughout Iraq, with focal points including both Baghdad and Basra. Supporters of al-Sadr, known in Iraq as Sadrist, took to the streets and breached the perimeter of the Baghdad Green Zone – a fortified compound housing the administrative buildings of the Iraqi government. The Republican Palace was stormed, and a nationwide curfew was implemented in a bid by Iraqi security forces to restore order.

In the evening of 29 August, members of the Saraya al-Salam (Peace Brigade) militia, a Sadrist organisation, sided with protesters in an effort to defend them against Iraqi security personnel and members of the Popular Mobilisation Forces – an Iranian aligned militia organisation. Approximately 30 people were killed and hundreds more wounded before al-Sadr requested all protesters to withdraw from the Green Zone on 30 August. Al-Sadr promptly declared that he would engage in a hunger strike until the violence subsided, urging Sadrists to cease hostilities immediately. The occupation of the Green Zone subsequently relented.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) condemned the outbreak of violence and called for an immediate "de-escalating [of] tensions" with a focus on dialogue to "resolve differences". UNAMI also stressed that an uptick in violence was "untenable" and threatened "the very survival of the [Iraqi] state." Further clashes between the Sarayat al-Salam and another Iranian militia organisation, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (Khazali Network), were recorded in Basra on 1 September. These clashes led to the deaths of at least five people and several more were reported injured.

Comment: Al-Sadr's retirement from political life comes amidst a tumultuous period in Iraqi politics that al-Sadr has been instrumental in navigating. The Sadrist faction within Iraq achieved the largest number of seats in the October 2021 general election; an electoral event that was boycotted by nearly 60 percent of the Iraqi electorate. Despite the electoral successes of the Sadrists, they did not achieve a majority, and no successful coalition agreement has been reached in the nearly 11 months since the election was held.



An Iran-aligned coalition of political actors, known as the Coordination Framework, have been instrumental in opposing any attempt to insert al-Sadr and the Sadrist faction into government. Al-Sadr has carved out a political position as an opponent of all foreign intervention in Iraq, decrying both Western and Iranian influence in the country. It is likely that al-Sadr's retirement has been driven by his analysis of the political situation in Iraq; al-Sadr is likely to be able to command Sadrists to support or oppose political deals and direct street action but is unlikely to achieve the top position in Iraqi politics currently. Outside of the political limelight, it is likely that al-Sadr hopes to wield considerable power without endangering himself and his influence through overt political manoeuvring.

With regards to the situation in Iraq as a whole, al-Sadr's announcement and the resulting street clashes that followed are likely to destabilise Iraq further over the short-to-medium term. Iraq's political process has proven incapable of piecing together a working government since the October 2021 general election, and al-Sadr's absence is likely to trigger a new stage of political negotiations amidst all parties involved in the process. There is an outstanding risk, however, that the impasse may prompt factions within the Iraqi political process to seek extra-parliamentary means to secure political gains. The longer the gridlock in Iraqi politics, the greater this risk becomes, particularly as external factors – such as the global food crisis – continue to place pressure on living standards and economic conditions within Iraq.



Pakistan

Devastating floods reported throughout the country

Pakistani officials estimate that more than 33 million Pakistanis have been affected by widespread flooding and that a third of the country is currently completely submerged. At least 1,136 people have been killed since June, while roads, crops, homes and bridges have been washed away. According to UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, every province of Pakistan has been affected. Pakistan's planning minister says estimates suggest the floods have caused at least USD 10 billion of damage, in a country already suffering from a political and an economic crisis. Pakistan's climate change minister, Sherry Rehman, has described the recent flooding in the country as a "climate-induced humanitarian disaster of epic proportions".

One of the hardest hit provinces, Sindh in southern Pakistan, has seen nearly nine times its usual August rainfall. One site in the province reported 1,288 millimetres of rain for the month. A typical August will see around 46 millimetres of rain. The full scale of the devastation in the province, which has a population of almost 50 million, is yet to be understood but entire villages and towns have been engulfed by flood waters and nearly half the cotton crop has been lost. As of 1 September, a fresh surge of water and mudslides are flowing down the Indus River towards Sindh, further threatening communities there. The military is conducting evacuations by plane and boat, but their window of opportunity is extremely limited.

Comment: Whilst the Pakistani government has been keen to highlight the role of climate change in this disaster, there are other factors that have contributed to the scale of the devastation. These include large-scale and long-term deforestation in the country and government failures to learn from the last major flooding event in the country in 2010. Pakistan also has the largest number of glaciers outside the polar regions and higher temperatures have led to significant melting in the Himalayas. Indeed, Pakistan experienced a significant heatwave earlier in 2022, with temperatures far exceeding 40 degrees Celsius for almost three months between March and May.

Extreme weather events in Pakistan demonstrate the increasingly prevalent threat posed by changing global climate. Pakistan provides an example of the disproportionality of climate change; the country produces less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and yet ranks amongst the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The Pakistani government estimates it will need USD 7 to USD 14 billion per year until 2050 to adapt and build climate resilient infrastructure. During the UN Climate Change Conference 2022 (COP27) in November, diplomats will be tasked with negotiating a binding agreement that compels the most developed countries into providing the finances needed to mitigate the most extreme effects of climate change in the countries that are most vulnerable.

The climate crisis poses one of the most prominent security threats to the stability of the current world order. The varying effects of climate change have already exposed and exacerbated existing socioeconomic and



political frailties at a time when there is already a great deal of political turmoil. Across Pakistan, vast swathes of rich agricultural land have been devastated in this year's monsoon, damaging food supplies and sending prices soaring at a time when global price rises are already significantly inflated. Worsening water shortages and food insecurity, as well as climate-induced migration, are likely triggers of destabilisation and will very likely stoke communal tensions and conflict in the coming years.



Myanmar

Aung San Suu Kyi faces up to 122 years imprisonment

Aung San Suu Kyi, the former leader of Myanmar, has been sentenced to a further three years in prison with hard labour. This latest sentence is due to the alleged crime of voter fraud and rigging of the country's November 2020 general election, which her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won overwhelmingly.

Ms. Suu Kyi has already been charged with, and found guilty of, 15 counts of corruption by earlier military courts. These earlier counts of corruption alleged that she abused her political position to buy and rent formerly-public land below market value and then proceeded to build a personal palace using donations meant for charitable purposes.

As a result of this latest charge, Ms. Suu Kyi now faces 20 years in prison. She still has a further nine charges to be heard in court, and if all of these are brought against her then the former leader of Myanmar faces at least 122 years in prison. Aung San Suu Kyi remains the most high-profile politician and pro-democracy activist in the country to be sentenced by the incumbent military junta, however she is not the only one. Since the junta seized power in 2021, they have reportedly arrested over 15,000 pro-democracy activists or politicians.

Of these, 12,000 have still yet to receive their sentence, whilst at least 70, including two children, have been handed the death sentence, and four have already been executed. Those executed include high-profile political activist, U Kyaw Min Yu, better known as Ko Jimmy, from the country's "generation 88" of student activists, and U Phyo Zeya Thaw, a former member of the country's parliament prior to the coup. A spokesperson for the military government stated that "if the death sentence is handed down, then the death sentence will be carried out", which appears to offer little in the way of compromise for those who have also been handed a death sentence.

Comment: The Myanmar military seized power in a coup and detained Aung San Suu Kyi, alongside many members of the country's parliament and the NLD, on 1 February 2021. This was the date on which the NLD would have commenced a second five-year term in office, having won in the November 2020 elections. The military justified their seizure by stating that the elections had seen widespread electoral fraud perpetuated by the NLD. As a result, the country was plunged into a prolonged period of civil unrest, with the junta responding with such deadly force that anti-coup protestors began to take up arms, effectively opening up a new front in the country's ongoing civil war which, having commenced in 1949, is the world's longest.

The sentencing of Ms. Suu Kyi to further years in prison, combined with the recent execution of pro-democracy activists and NLD members, underscores the brutality with which the military junta is ruling the country. The executions can also be seen as strong rebuke to the UN, ASEAN and various western nations, all of whom had come together to broker a compromise with the junta that they would not enact any death sentences and would free political prisoners.

In treating its opponents so harshly, however, the military junta creates significant risks for itself. Firstly, in executing activists and democratic politicians, it risks creating martyrs and galvanising the country's democratic resistance. Meanwhile, the continual use of deadly armed force against the country's anti-coup and pro-democracy activists increasingly risks pushing them to ally with the nation's constellation of armed regional actors. This would highly likely worsen the ongoing civil war across much of the country.

For Ms. Suu Kyi, it is almost certain that she will be found guilty of the further charges that the military government have announced, and that as a result she will face over a century in prison. The continual addition of jail time to Suu Kyi's sentence, plus the execution of political prisoners, will very likely only lead to further escalation in the deadly conflict between the military government and activists.